Volume 13 JANUARY, 1952 Number 1

# THE SHANE QUARTERLY

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
APR 7 1952
PERIODICAL READING ROOM

CONTENTS

HEARD IN THE GATES

I. THREE RECENT MOVEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF THEOLOGY
William Robinson, M.A., D.D., S.T.D.

1. The Return to Biblical Theology
2. The Existential Emphasis
3. The Eschatological Emphasis

$1 a Year 60c a Copy

# THE SCHOOL OF RELIGION

***A Graduate Seminary Constituting One of the Separate Schools of Butler University***

*Accredited by the American Association of Theological Schools*

FACULTY FOR 1951-52:

ORMAN L. SHELTON, D.D. Dean, and Professor, Christian Ministries.

TOYOZO W. NAKARAI, PH.D. Professor, Semitics.

S. MARION SMITH, M.A., B.D. Professor, New Testament.

DAVID C. PELLETT, M.A., B.D. Assistant Professor, Semitic Languages and Literature, and New Testament.

WILLIAM ROBINSON, M.A., D.D., S.T.D. Professor, Christian Doctrine.

ARTHUR HOLMES, PH.D., TH.D., LL.D. Professor, the Psychology and Philosophy of Religion.

RONALD E. OSBORN, M.A., B.D. Associate Professor, Church History.

A. C. WATTERS, M.A., PH.D. Associate Professor, Missions.

FRANK J. ALBERT, B.D. Assistant Professor, Christian Doctrine and Church History.

BEAUFORD A. NORRIS, M.A., B.D., PH.D. Assistant Professor, Pastoral Work and City Church.

FRANKLIN E. RECTOR, M.S. Assistant Professor, Rural Church.

JAMES B. MILLER, B.D. Assistant Professor, Religious Education.

ALFRED R. EDYVEAN, M.A., B.D., PH.D. Assistant Professor, Speech and Radio.

FREDERICK D. KERSHNER, M.A., LL.D. Professor, Christian Doctrine. On leave of absence.

A. E. CORY, D.D., LL.D. Adjunct Professor, Emeritus, Missions and Comparative Religions.

Courses are arranged under the four fields according to modern seminary standards: the Biblical, Doctrinal, Historical and Practical. Work may be taken toward the B.D., M.R.E., and Th.M. degrees; also, M.A. in University. New physical plant completed in 1942. Specialized theological library aggregating over 30,000 volumes.

For catalog and other information, address

**SCHOOL OF RELIGION**

***Butler University***

**Indianapolis 7, Indiana**

BR
1
.S53

# THE SHANE QUARTERLY

VOLUME XIII JANUARY, 1952 NUMBER 1

Entered as second class matter November 13, 1945, at the post office at Indianapolis, Indiana, under act of March 3, 1879.

*Published Quarterly*

OCTOBER, JANUARY, APRIL, JULY

By

SCHOOL OF RELIGION, BUTLER UNIVERSITY

Editor—RONALD E. OSBORN

Managing Editor—ORMAN L. SHELTON

Editorial Committee

O. L. SHELTON, T. W. NAKARAI, A. C. WATTERS, B. A. NORRIS AND R. E. OSBORN

Editorial Staff

FACULTY AND LECTURERS OF THE SCHOOL OF RELIGION
BUTLER UNIVERSITY

The policy of the SHANE QUARTERLY shall be to present the trend of contemporary thought and practice, the results of investigation, general discussion and book reviews and annotations in the field of religion.

Contributing Staff:

PRINCIPAL A. L. HADDON.....Dunedin, New Zealand
LYMAN HOOVER, M. A....International Y. M. C. A., Shanghai, China

All communications should be addressed to

**THE SHANE QUARTERLY**
**School of Religion, Butler University**
**INDIANAPOLIS 7, INDIANA**

Lectures delivered in Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, under the auspices of the College of the Churches of Christ in Canada. Published by permission.

## HEARD IN THE GATES

DR. WILLIAM ROBINSON is head of the Department of Christian Doctrine and Theology, School of Religion, Butler University.

He has the B. S. degree, University of Liverpool; the M. A. degree, Oxford University; honorary D. D., Drake University; honorary S. T. D., Butler University.

He was principal of Overdale College for twenty-nine years, and led the school to outstanding recognition and service. For seventeen years he was professor of Christian Doctrine in Selly Oak Colleges, and for seven years lecturer in Theology in Birmingham University.

He is recognized as one of the leading theologians of Great Britain and the Continent. He was representative to Geneva, 1920; Lausanne, 1927; Edinburgh, 1937; Amsterdam, 1948; president of the British Council of Churches, Faith and Order Department, member of the Free Church Federal Council, and moderator of the Free Church Council. Since coming to America, September 1, 1951, Dr. Robinson has immediately taken a leading place in Theology and academic leadership. Besides delivering the lectures in this volume at Toronto University, he was lecturer for the West Virginia State Convention; lectured in the University Mission, National Council of Churches, Eureka College in November, 1951; in the Evangelistic Crusade, National Council, Evansville, Indiana, and for the Indiana Pastors' Institute at Evansville. He is to be the representative of the British Churches in the Faith and Order Conference at Lund, Sweden in August, 1952.

He was editor of *The Christian Advocate* for eleven years, contributor to *Journal of Theological Studies, Theology, Christendom, Religion in Education, Hibbert Journal, The Modern Churchman,* and other journals.

He is the author of a number of books and monographs: *The Biblical Doctrine of the Church, Whither Theology? The Shattered Cross, The Devil and God, Essays on Christian Unity, Religion and Life, What Churches of Christ Stand For, Holy Ordinances, Ministry and Sacraments,* and others.

# THREE RECENT MOVEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF THEOLOGY

*By*

WILLIAM ROBINSON

Lectures were delivered in Emmanual College, University of Toronto, under the auspices of the College of the Churches of Christ in Canada.

## I. THE RETURN TO BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

IT is a long stride from Harnack's *What is Christianity,* published in English in the early years of this century, to Kraemer's *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World,* published in preparation for the Tambaram Missionary Conference in 1938. It represents at least three great movements in the field of theology, movements as revolutionary as the Copernican movement in the field of astronomy, the Darwinian revolution in the field of biology, or the modern revolution in the field of physics. Behind these movements in the field of theology, as well as similar movements in the field of philosophy, lies the shade of that strange figure Sören Kierkegaard, who is now frequently labeled as a psychopathic genius, but a genius for all that. But there lies much more—the researches of the school of Form-Critics and the labors of theologians like Khäler, James Denney, P. T. Forsyth, Karl Heim, and P. Althaus. The names of living theologians such as Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich and Reinhold Neibuhr must be seen in the light of these past giants. Strange to say, living in the midst of this vast upheaval, there are many, not only in the school of Fundamentalists, but amongst Liberals of what must *now* be described as "the old school," who have chosen to know nothing of its import. Like some of old, "they wist not whether there be any Holy Ghost!" The former class cling tenaciously to the metaphysical theology of the 17th and 18th centuries (inherited from the Middle Ages), though many of them profess to know nothing about it, and to take the Bible only. But, whether they know it or not, it is a Bible interpreted by Scholasticism, except that the sacramentalism of Scholasticism is rejected. They refuse to tread the treacherous ground of the New Theology, as deliberately as did their Fundamentalist forefathers of the late 19th century refuse to tread the ground of the New Liberalism[1]

[1] See Dr. Van Till's book, *The New Modernism,* where men like Barth, Brunner, and Kraemer are regarded as worse heretics than von Harnack.

But, many Liberals cling tenaciously to the shibboleths of the late 19th century Liberal Christianity, as tenaciously as the Fundamentalists cling to theirs. They can only be described as "the new Fundamentalists," though some might prefer to attach the label "the New Liberal Fundamentalists." Even Harnack, who thought he was casting out Greek metaphysics from theology and returning to the "simple Gospel," and who accused the Fathers from St. Paul down of emptying out the content of the "simple Gospel" of the Synoptic Gospels and substituting Greek metaphysics, was more Grecian than those whom he accused; for they sought to retain the very core of the Gospel, which far from being "simple" was described by St. Paul as a "mystery" and is even so regarded in the simple Gospel of Mark. They, even the Greek Fathers, retained the idea of the Gospel as a story, a set of events, as can be seen from the most ancient baptismal creeds, something as Prof. Burkitt said, annalistic and not something systematic. But Harnack regarded original Christianity as a *system of thought* after the Greek manner. Even a glance at the so-called Apostles' Creed would have shown him that it was at first a series of *facts,* events in history, an insight which had not been lackig in Alexander Campbell.[2]

These movements in the field of theology are mainly three: (1) the return to Biblical theology; (2) the existentialist emphasis; (3) and the eschatological emphasis, and in this first lecture I shall deal with the return to Biblical theology. This is seen, not only in Barth, Brunner, and Kraemer but in Reinhold Neibuhr, Tillich, Pier, John Bennett, and Nels Ferré, though some of these have approached it by a different road. It must, however, be remembered that this is a return to the Bible as seen in the full light of the critical work done in the 20th century, especially by the school of Form-criticism. It is no going-back on that work. This is what distresses men like Van Till whose scholarly acumen understands it fully.

The critical work of the 20th century can be described as constructive, as well as analytical, and this is true both of the criticism of the Old Testament and of the New Testament. Biblical criticism is axiomatic to the New Theologians; there can be no return to the old Fundamentalism, for that to them is part of the metaphysical apparatus of the Schoolmen. If this movement is a return to Biblical Theology, it is also a return to Church Theology, for it is realized that the Church not only lies behind the Bible—the Jewish Church behind the Old Testament,

[2] See *The Christian System,* pp. 108-11. See also *The Messiahship,* by Walter Scott, p. 252.

and the Christian Church behind the New Testament—but that the Church is part of the Gospel, and not an addendum to the Gospel. There is and can be no Messiah without the Messianic Community, no Redeemer without the Redeemed Society. The Bible is about God and man, but about man in community, first with God, and then with his fellow-men.

This return to Biblical Theology might be expected in Protestantism where it would be natural, but it is seen in Catholicism also, in Anglo-Catholicism, in Eastern Orthodoxy, and in Roman Catholicism. In Anglo-Catholicism it has tended to take an unhealthy turn in the return to the allegorical interpretation of the Bible. I can only express my own view that any system of theology based on the allegorical interpretation of the Bible is built on sand. This allegorical interpretation has been shown most in the works of Father Hebert,[3] and in a young Oxford scholar of the same persuasion, Austin Farrer. It colors parts of the recent book, *The Apostolic Ministry,* edited by Kenneth Kirk, the Bishop of Oxford, where Apostolic Succession finds proof in a text from the book of Judges![4] The works of Phythian-Adams, an Old Testament scholar of the same persuasion, are freer from it.[5] This allegorical interpretation needs to be checked before it runs wild, as it did in the old Protestant theology of the early years of the nineteenth century. Exercised with ingenuity, one can prove anything. It gives play to wild and extravagant imagination and is far from the Biblical realism of men like Barth, Brunner, Kraemer, and Niebuhr, who see no more than "pattern events" in the Old Testament, such as the redemption of Israel from bondage in Egypt and from captivity in Babylon.

This return to Biblical Theology is paralleled by the awakening sense in the field of New Testament criticism that the New Testament is saturated with Old Testament ideas not only in actual quotations, but in allusions. This has been shown in the work of scholars such as Dibelius, Bultmann, C. H. Dodd, and T. W. Manson. The first shock was given by the publication of two books, T. W. Manson's *The Teaching of Jesus,*[6] and *The Riddle of the New Testament,* by Hoskyns and Davey. The full fruits of it appear in Hoskyns' two volume commentary on St. John's Gospel, published posthumously by Davey. The Aramaic background of certain New Testament books had long been

[3] See *The Throne of David.*
[4] See *The Apostolic Ministry,* pp. 110 where Judges IX: 6-21 is referred to.
[5] See *The Call of Israel, The Fullness of Israel, The People and the Presence.*
[6] See also the recent publication of his, *The Sayings of Jesus.*

suggested by such scholars as Burney of Oxford, and Torrey of Harvard, and now it is almost impossible to be a New Testament expert without knowledge of Aramaic as well as of Hebrew and Greek. In no place has this new insight had more effect than in the interpretation of the Johannine writings,[7] especially the Prologue of the Gospel. It is seen that the Prologue is dominated by the ideas of Genesis I, and by the story of the Tabernacle in Exodus XXXIII.

This return to Biblical Theology is seen even in the Roman Catholic Church. In England a new translation of the Vulgate New Testament has been produced by Monseigneur Ronald Knox and is now equally authorized for public and private reading along with the Rheims version. Needless to say, Monseigneur Knox has used not only the sacrosanct Vulgate text, but ancient Greek sources, and the translation into modern English is both felicitous and accurate. Apart from footnotes, where special Roman Catholic doctrine is advocated, and the titles of books transcribed as they are found in the Vulgate, the translation is one of the best in modern English. He has done the same for the Old Testament, though here his two volumes are not authorized by the Hierarchy in England. They are privately published. More significant is the new Roman Latin Psalter, translated by Roman scholars from the original Hebrew and the Septuagint, and not from the Vulgate, which to Romans has been the *infallible* text! But most significant of all is the isstue of *Divino Afflante Spiritu,* by Pius XII in 1943, translated into English under the title of *Stand by the Bible.* Fancy that from the Roman Church! This document encourages the scientific and historical study of the Bible.

All this—the new emphasis on Biblical Theology—has led to the appearance of a new kind of commentary, a commentary not merely concerned with archaeology, language, and history, but vitally concerned with doctrine.[8] Further, it has meant a new concept of revelation, which is the "given thing," "the mighty works of God," the Gospel, God's "visiting and redeeming His people, Israel." It is this "given thing" which lies behind both the Church and the New Testament and makes irrelevant the question, "Church *or* New Testament."[9] It is also

---

[7] See C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks,* and his *Moffatt Commentary on the Johannine Epistles.*

[8] Good examples are C. H. Dodd's *Moffatt's Commentary on the Johannine Epistles* and Selwyn's *Commentary on I Peter.*

[9] This was anticipated by Alexander Campbell and by F. D. Maurice in the first half of the 19th century, and by Baron von Hügel and P. T. Forsyth later in the century. Forsyth made a clear distinction between "revealed truth" and "truths of revelation."

this "given thing" which the Bible records, and which must be brought to bear as a judgment on every part of the Bible itself as well as upon the Church in every age, both upon its practices and upon its theological pronouncements. The Church is always under reformation to the Word of God. When we talk about "saving faith" we are also talking about "saving history." It was George Adam Smith who said with prophetic insight as long ago as 1871, when lecturing to students in Aberdeen, "without saving history there could be no saving doctrine." He declared that "in the whole Old Testament history, God appeared as in no other history, as direct chief actor, ever near His people; so that history is indispensible for teaching the young."[10] It is this redemptive activity which the New Theologians mean when they talk about "the Word of God," and they see it centering in the redemptive activity in Jesus Christ, our Lord. He not only *brings* the Gospel, but He *is* the Gospel which He brings.[11] Having come near to discarding the Bible, we are back again in its "saving history" and refreshed by its perennial insights. Whilst it may be said of many Liberals that they "threw the baby out with the bath water," here it can be said that the bath water has been thrown out, and with a vengeance, but the baby has been kept. This does not mean that any of us should be Barthians, Brunnerians or Neibhurians. I am sure that Barth would regard his theology as temporary as any other which has preceded it, as something to be challenged by the next theological revolution; but such is not the case with the Eternal Gospel, which his theology and that of other scholars of the present age, has served to make clear in its lineaments.

The hopes expressed by Thomas Campbell in 1809, when in his first proposition he stated that "the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one,"[12] are more likely to be fulfilled in the next fifty years than in the one-hundred-and-fifty years which followed his *Declaration and Address*. Then when he uttered these hopes, although he was feeling towards seeing the Bible as *a historical* book, he was still lingering in the orthodox post-Reformation conception of the Bible as verbally inspired in all its parts and containing the truth of God. It was to him, and to his fellow-Christians to whom he appealed, a source of dogmatic proof texts, and it is amazing that with that background he discovered so much *historical* truth, especially about the Church on earth. But he pleaded just at the moment when this dogmatic proof-text method was in process of being

[10] See the Preface to *Saving History*, by Prof. J. R. Coates.
[11] See *The Mediator*, by Brunner.
[12] See *The Declaration and Address*.

destroyed. It claimed complete freedom from dogmatic assumptions and was soon ceasing to be scientific by falling foul of equally dogmatic *humanistic* assumptions. In the "liberal theology" which emerged, it has now been shown that not only scientific research was there, but also a definite dogmatic standard supplied by the prevailing optimistic scientific humanism of the age.[13] His plea had little chance of winning and it became an embarrassment to the people who followed Campbell, especially when they began to look over their own dogmatic walls which they had built, not as creeds to which, mistakenly, they were averse, but as shibboleths.[14]

In the forty years or so a great change has occurred, not a return to the old unhistorical view, but to a wholly new Biblical Realism. "The scholars of the present theological era are no less scrupulous in their scientific work than their predecessors. But their conception of the task has been enlarged. Their aim is first to discover by scientific study the chief concepts of both the Old and the New Testaments, and then by every available means to expound the biblical religion, to give expression to the biblical revelation in its greatness and transcendence."[15]

Amongst the new insights of this new scholarship is the rediscovery of the idea of the Church. The collapse of individualism in our day has helped towards the discovery of the Church as a fellowship of men and women ruled by Christ through the Holy Spirit. But more than this, it is seen that the Church is part of the Gospel, the good news revealed in Jesus Christ. The Church is coming to be seen as the "people of God," the "New Israel" unassailed by national, racial, and class barriers. It is charged and commissioned to preach the Apostolic *kērygma* and to exhibit it in its worship and life. How near to Alexander Campbell's insights is the following passage quoted from the Report of The Commission on the Church of the World Council of the Churches, consisting of theologians round the world from Orthodox, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Congregational, Methodist and Disciples churches: "The Church is eschatological as the people of God on pilgrimage towards the future Reign of God. It is the Church Militant (*in via*) on the march towards the Church Triumphant

[13] See the works of Albrecht Ritschl. But see, also, an article on "The Judgment of God" which I wrote for *The Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 4, No.2.

[14] This they did after 1888 and were perturbed to find their main prop taken from under their building, that of a verbally inspired Bible. One school hurriedly began to harmonize their findings with the latest scholarship and to empty out most of their contents. The other dug itself in more rigidly and became more like what Roman Catholic dogmatic Theology was.

[15] See *The Church—A Faith and Order Report*, 1951, p. 42.

in the world to come. At the same time the Church is sacramental in the sense that in and through human words and bodily acts—washing with water, a meal of bread and wine, accompanied by interpretative words—the Kingdom of God which is to come is also present here and now. The eschatological and sacramental character of the Church are thus quite inseparable. Sacraments, as well as preaching, always require faith and personal surrender. The New Testament teaching is equally far from a mere materializing and from a mere spiritualizing of the means of grace."[16]

Much is to be hoped from this attitude and it is difficult to doubt that the Commission on the Church is too optimistic, even of bridging the widest gap—that between Protestant and Catholic, say in the next fifty years—when they say: "There is, of course, in New Testament study today a great variety of approaches, but 'biblical theology' has provided in recent years a common language and a common insight enabling scholars of long-separated Churches to speak to one another with a new degree of mutual understanding."[17] "By returning to Biblical sources, Christians draw closer to their common Lord, and so to one another."[18]

---

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

[17] See a pamphlet issued by the Study Department of the World Council of Churches, entitled *Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible.*

[18] *The Church—A Faith and Order Report,* p. 46.

## II. The Existential Emphasis

The second recent movement in theology is the revival of existentialism. (A fearful word!) In its modern form this philosophy derives from Kierkegaard, but it develops through the nineteenth century in two contrasted forms, its Pantheistic and materialistic form, and its Theistic form, in which it appeared in Kierkegaard himself. In its Pantheistic and materialistic form it is seen in Heidegger and Fuerbach, and through the latter it becomes the mother of the New Psychology as seen in Freud and his followers. It is the philosophy of despair and, in its most extreme form, is seen in the work of Jean Paul Sartre, playwright, novelist, essayist and philosopher. But it is also the philosophy of *dynamism* as over against the staticism of the *philosophia perennis* derived from Plato, in which most Christian thinking has been expressed heretofore. It is also the philosophy of the *concrete,* as over against the philosophy of the *abstract.* In these two senses it is heralded by the work of Henri Bergson, Rudolph Eucken, Whitehead and Croce as well as by that of Berdyaev and Henry Nelson Wieman. It examines more deeply the question of the subjective and objective, of the relative and the absolute, and fits in better with the relativity of the New Physics. In one sense it may be said to be the philosophy of consciousness, especially of self-consciousness, of the *personal,* and in this sense is reflected in the works of McCleod Campbell, S. T. Coleridge, and F. D. Maurice as well as of Alexander Campbell, who were all exploring the paradoxes of personal relationship.[1] At this point it is seen as the philosophy of *situation* and of *decision.* In Gabriel Marcel, the co-worker of Sartre, it has taken a sensational turn in that Marcel, through his adoption of it in its negative form, has become a convinced Christian.[2] On its humanistic side it is stark naked pessimism without hope in the world or beyond the world; but it has another side.

Most of the new theologians would deny that they were existentialists. Karl Barth has done so, but they are existentialists in that they do not look to the *philosophia perennis* to support their claims, nor as a channel through which to interpret them; in that they recognize that the Bible is not dealing with *abstract* terms, but with the *concrete;* and in that they emphasize that it is dealing with *personal* encounter, an encounter in which man is not merely a *spectator,* but a *player* in the game

[1] See McCleod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement;* Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection;* F. D. Maurice, *What is Revelation?;* A. Campbell, *Sermon on the Law,* and *The Christian System.*

[2] See his, *The Mystery of Being.*

(situation) of life. He cannot stand outside and view things as a mere *observer,* as the Greeks thought he could; he views things from the inside as part of, and yet over and above, the process going on. For this reason the categories of any abstract philosophy are false to reality, especially the category of the *subjective-objective.* These categories land us ultimately in Aristotle's Deism, the conception of a God absolutely remote, totally ineffective, confined to "immobile activity" and to the eternal contemplation of Himself; or they land us in a Pantheism in which God is bound hand and foot. They are totally inadequate to the Biblical conception of "the *living* God."

There is a world of difference between the encounter represented by "I and it" and that represented by "I and thou." In a book with the latter title, Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher, has made clear what this means for the encounter between God and man, and between man and man, as recounted in the Bible. Again forerunners in this way of looking at things are to be found in F. D. Maurice, Kähler, P. T. Forsyth and Josiah Royce.[3] Maurice pursues the theme in his examination of Revelation; Forsyth in his book *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ,* where he throws a flood of light on the doctrine of the human and the divine in the incarnate Christ. The real mystery of the universe is not the atom, but life, especially conscious life—personality. According to the Bible *personality* is the real miracle of the universe, and the one truly sacred thing. This is why any Totalitarian system of thought and action, whether of right or left, has to get rid of the Bible, and in some measure explains its anti-Semitism. All this is throwing a new light on many things in the Bible and changing theological concepts, especially in the field of the Doctrine of God, of the Person and Work of Christ, of Grace, of Predestination, and of Providence.

Let us see how it modifies the Doctrine of God. Plato was speculating about God and his speculation was pretty good; but the Jews were not *speculating,* they were *encountering,* and to this encounter they *witnessed.* "Witness" is the Jewish and Christian word; "speculation" is the Greek word. The Greeks were *observing* God, as phenomena are observed in other sciences, and though to them He was the ground of all phenomena, He was *observed,* like other phenomena. On the other hand, the Jews *encountered* God in an "I and Thou" relationship. So plain is this in the Bible that they can speak of *knowing* God, daringly using a word which is equally applicable to sexual intercourse.

[3] See Royce's *Philosophy of Loyalty.*

Plato came to the conclusion that there are three eternal realities—three things which are imperishable. They are Truth, Beauty and Goodness. These, he said, differ from all other existing things in one particular. They are *spiritual* realities and truly real, while all other things are merely shadows of reality. If you could analyze the universe down to its final elements, you would find that they are these three. And so for him, God is the Being of perfect Truth, perfect Beauty, and perfect Goodness, and the true quest of human life is the quest for Truth, Beauty and Goodness—in other words, the quest for God. After all there is something in this contention of Plato's for there is something unique in this trinity of values. To mention only one thing—Truth, Beauty and Goodness—are of such a nature that they seem to be the only things of value which can be owned unselfishly. The pursuit of all other goods, such as money, power, etc., is always, in a measure, a selfish pursuit. I can only gain at the expense of others, and so fellowship is broken. But the more I seek the expression of Truth in my life and the rejection of all that is false and a sham, the better it is, not only for me, but for all; the more I strive for the creation of beauty in character and in craftmanship, the more beauty there is for others to enjoy; and the more I become fundamentally good, the better the world becomes for all men. I do not rob others by the increase of my own wealth in these goods.

If God exists at all, it is easy to see that He must be a Being with the character of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Every attempt of man to understand the universe has been an endeavor to submit it to the test or measure of Truth. We know that fundamentally it is True, and we work on that assumption, and so build up our art, science, literature, architecture, music, etc. The very fact, also, that we cannot live rightly and at the same time live in error and falsehood, and that we know this to be true, is testimony to the fact that the hidden structure, the inner reality of the universe is Truth, and that God prefers Truth to error; indeed that God is Truth. Again, we have only to look at God's handiwork, unspoilt by man, to be assured of the fact that the God who made the universe is a God of Beauty and not of ugliness. Finally, in spite of the baffling problem of evil and suffering, there is plenty of evidence that God prefers goodness to evil; for the whole universe is really on the side of the Good rather than of Evil. The whole struggle of mankind in the progress of civilization towards moral perfection witnesses to the reality of Goodness in God. This may all be allowed in regard to Plato's speculation about God.

The defect of Plato's Idealism is perhaps best seen when we ask the question, "What comfort is this to us?" What comfort is it to know that God is true, beautiful and good, if I find myself painfully struggling with error, ugliness and evil with no hope of attaining anything else? A God of Truth might be coldly indifferent to my struggle against these things, using me as a mere puppet in the game He is playing. So too, a God of Beauty might be icily aloof and remote from the battle I am waging against ugliness and sham. Beauty often stands afar off, unattainable by me. And even a God of Goodness need have no essential interest in the moral struggle in which I am engaged. Like one of those stone Buddhas in an eastern temple, calm and remote, He might regard us all from afar off, complacent and unmoved, smilingly detached. I, in my battle for goodness, would feel myself a little solitary unit, obeying the instinct of goodness in my heart, but for no ultimate purpose I knew of, if God were so far away and so aloof.

So our three absolute values just by themselves do not seem to be able to get us very far. They may exist all right and our lives be based on them, but they can give us no guarantee of final victory in our struggle for life and no comfort in our distresses. Because they are *impersonal* and point to an impersonal God, they do not and cannot give us the "strength and courage to grasp life's nettle." In other words they give no guarantee that God is *personal*, personally related to man, and therefore in the struggle with us. That is the assurance we really need.

Now, this is just where the *encounter* of the Jews with God comes in. The story of it is in the Old Testament. Unfortunately the literature has reached us in a rather jumbled form, but when, following the scholars of the past 150 years, we sort it out and arrange it more or less chronologically, we see developing the most daring conception of God that has ever been given to men; for the literature on one side is really an answer to the question "What is God like?" But the concern, unlike Greek metaphysics, is not with what God is like metaphysically, but with the *character* of God, how He is related to man and as to how He will be likely to *act* in a certain situation. Quite briefly the Biblical Revelation asserts three things about God: (1) God is not less than *personal*—He is not just abstract Truth, Beauty and Goodness, but He is the *living* God; (2) the He is in *personal* (not mechanical, nor even legal) relationship with man. Hosea gets practically as far as seeing that God is in a *love* relationship to Israel, and this is the burden of

Deuteronomy; (3) that, whatever the meaning of the whole mystery of sin and evil and suffering may be, God is *in the struggle with us,* and final victory is guaranteed. This makes a world of difference. The Hebrew had no doubt at all that God had *acted* in history, and that history had a purpose and was moving toward a glorious end. And, remember, that history is not something apart from us. We are history, and God is working His purpose out in and through us.

Of course in the Bible there are all kinds of crude elements and primitive notions about God mixed up with this. It is not all on one level. The process of what we call *revelation,* seen from this side, was a developing one, though it was *revelation,* the self-disclosure of God, and not mere *discovery.* In its course the Hebrews accepted the character of God as True (or faithful), Beautiful and Good, though they were much more inclined to put these in the order, Faithful, Good and Beautiful (glorious). But their great contribution to the understanding of God, was this daring conception that, though God is perfect in righteousness and holiness and far above us, yet He is *intimately* concerned with human needs and human hopes. To them He was the Ultimate One and the Intimate One, and this is a more existential way of looking at God than to speak of transcendence and immanence. "As a father pitieth his children" so does God pity men and women, and He "is afflicted in all their afflictions."

Avoiding both Deism, which posits an absentee God and so keeps inviolate the notion of the Absolute; and Pantheism, which sacrifices the Absolute to the Related, the Bible takes a more daring way. And here we are challenged to have *faith,* for the solution is a paradox. The Bible claims that God is both *above and beyond* the universe and at the same time *in* it. He is the *Ultimate One* and the *Intimate One;* both the goal and the way to the goal. He has all the perfection of the transcendent God and all the intimacy of the immanent God. This is the Christian answer, that God is above and through and in us all. To put it quite simply, it means that God is Creator and that He is the *living* God, not merely that He exists, but that He is the Existent One. Because He is the Living God, he is in *personal* relationship to persons, and this means that God is in the struggle with us. Though we may be perplexed, we are not "perplexed unto despair." Further, it means that we have *hope,* for though we be hard pressed by evil and defeat seems certain, "they that be for us are more than they that be against us"—God is not a prisoner in His own universe.

When the Bible claims that God is *personal*, it does not mean that He is limited by what *we* know of personality. It never says that He is *a person*. Consider a passage such as the following: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Yahweh. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."[4] But it does mean that human personality is of such a nature that God is able to come into communication with us and to have *fellowship* with us, because we have been made in the image and likeness of God. We could not have communion and fellowship with that which was unlike us. There is a very intimate relationship between divine and human personality. This relationship may be marred by sin, by the breaking of trust and failure of loyalty on our part, but it is never wholly put out of the range of possibility. From God's side His loving relationship to us is part of the truth about His nature.

Now, the Christian Faith claims that this relationship of divine and human personality, in the course of history, received visible and actual expression in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. God was disclosed in Him. Jesus is at one and the same time (1) the revelation of the perfect Man—a showing forth, not in some kind of abstract and ideal way, but in real flesh and blood, of what human personality can be in its perfection; (2) the revelation of the true *character* of God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," said Jesus to the disciples, who wistfully desired to see the Father. Jesus not only came to teach men what was the character of God (He did this as no one has done it before Him. His parables, which almost without exception are devoted to this task, are unequalled); but more than this, He is "the image of the invisible God," the visible expression of the character of God acting under human conditions. He not only *brings* the Gospel (good news about God,) but He *is* the Gospel which He brings.

This is the Christian Faith, and it should be noticed that Christianity is more concerned with the *character* of God than with His metaphysical nature. It is more concerned with the way in which He deals with men and women than with His attributes, such as omnipotence, omniscience, etc. These difficult ideas, strictly speaking, are not the concern of the Christian Faith, of the Gospel. They belong to the realm of what Campbell called "opinion," rather than to that of Faith, and what most theologians have called *"theologoumena."* The Gospel

[4] Isaiah LV: 8, 9.

does not claim even that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is a *total* revelation of God, but a completely *adequate* revelation, adequate to all our needs; for Jesus was a Man, living in a certain place and time. Thus, in the life of flesh He was limited, whereas God is not. Nor does this revelation of God in Christ appear in a vacuum. It is a revelation in history and appears as the culmination of a process in history. History, especially the history of Israel, was leading up to Christ. This means that for Christians Jesus becomes the *center of history*. All that had happened to man in the long ages before His coming, and all that has happened since and that will happen, finds its meaning in Him. It finds also its judgment and its redemption in Him.

This, I believe, was the contention of the writer in the Prologue to St. John's Gospel. He sees history as an age-long process, and Christ as having significance for *all* history. In this long process he describes certain movements. (1) "He, (the Creator of the World) was in the world and the world *knew* him not." Here, I believe he uses the word "know" in its Hebrew and Aramaic sense of personal knowledge, something existential; and speaks of pre-history when this personal knowledge of God was unknown. (2) "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Here, I believe, he refers to Israel and God's coming to them, and their rejection of Him. Here is involved the whole set of ideas in Covenant and Election which the *concrete* cannot escape.[5] The Word of God does not come *generally*, to all, but to particular races and to particular men within those races. His relation to us is personal and, therefore, must be selective. So they were God's chosen people, a redemptive race to fulfill His purpose of love. (3) "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Here, I believe, he refers to "Israel within Israel," what Isaiah, and the prophets who succeeded him, called "the remnant." These were the prophets, sages, psalmists and visionaries who were faithful and expressed in some measure the true character of God. (4) "And the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled with us (and we beheld his glory [shekinah], the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."[6] This is the full realization in a Human Person of the character of divine

[5] Henry Nelson Wieman has said that God alone is able to work perfectly in the concrete. This is a perfectly existential way of looking at the matter.

[6] The word "tabernacled" is hidden in our translation. I believe that there stands behind this verse Ex. XXXIII: 7-11 with its reference to the Tabernacle and Shekinah.

Personality. Revelation has reached a limiting *concretion*: it is the concretion of the Absolute.

More and more the Christian claims that Jesus is the perfect expression of human personality, and His authority as teacher and example are admitted on every hand. Note for example the admission of men like Gandhi, Bernard Shaw, and even Bertrand Russell.[7] He, who was a Jew, makes His appeal to men and women of all races and color. He, who lived a short life, in an age and place very different from ours, becomes the ideal Man for our age and for the whole world. He becomes the contemporary of men and women in all ages and all places. His teaching, which was influenced and limited by the circumstances of His place and day, has about it a non-temporal quality which makes it true for us in our day, and we believe for all time. This is not timelessness, but fullness of time.

But what of the claim that He was the perfect expression of Divine Personality? About this I want to say only two things:

1. If God is related to us in a *personal* way, then the revelation of God in Human Form is just what we should expect. The action of God in history, as *personal* action, revealed in a "chosen" race and "chosen" individuals, was bound eventually to come to a focus in a single person, where, so to speak, God would be floodlit. Or, to put the same thought in another way, if God's relationship to men is personal, then He cannot *stand outside* their struggles and sufferings. The essence of true personal relationship is to be able to *stand in with*, to share, and often to bear the agony and sorrow of those whom we love. When we love others we bear their sufferings with them and for them, when we can. That is what we mean by vicarious suffering. So Jesus suffered for men because He loved them, and so God suffered in Christ for men because He loves them. We see in the life, agony, and death of Jesus this action of God at the point of its greatest intensity.

2. Secondly, if Jesus be the perfection of Manhood, and so the perfect Example for us to follow, and no more than this, then of all men we are the most miserable, for we know that in our *own power* we cannot be like Him. There is amongst us the sense of failure, failure

[7] See Bertrand Russell, *The Impact of Science on Society*, p. 59, where he says, "The root of the matter is a very simple and old-fashioned thing, a thing so simple that I am almost ashamed to mention it for fear of the derisive smile with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean—please forgive me for mentioning it—is love, Christian love, or compassion. If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide for action, a reason for courage, an imperative necessity for intellectual honesty."

of nerve. Fear and insecurity threaten our civilization. The whole world is being shaken, and the most serious thing today is that we don't believe in anything, neither God, country, political party, nor leaders. We are fast becoming rootless men and women. And though we whistle to keep up our courage, and shout and bluster, and talk of Great Powers, and build huge armaments, there is a hidden fear all the time eating at the vitals of our civilization. Where can men turn for hope? Science cannot really help us, for its high priests merely present us with a universe which seems wholly indifferent to our moral and spiritual struggle.[8] The people whom we call Humanists are equally hopeless and pessimistic. To believe that once man becomes sufficiently civilized he will behave decently, in other words to think that education will do everything, is sheer superstition.[9] Man now, as ever, needs more than education! He needs Life! Many of the High priests of education, of this Humanistic faith, such as Aldous Huxley, have made it clear that they do not believe that it can *save* humanity.[10] In this world of good and evil, of human victory and human failure, of life and death, of faith and futility, we know that it is not culture and polish that we need, but the power to conquer our failure and to overcome our inability, in other words to become "new creatures." There is no hope unless what we see in the life, death and resurrection of Christ is the *action* of God, and unless, as St. Paul puts it, "God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself," and unless in Him and in His resurrection, there is the Victory, the assurance of Life for each of us. Jesus Christ then becomes, not only instruction and example, but *power*. "In him was life" as well as light, and only is that Light, the light of men, if He was also the Life. He is not only the Wisdom of God, but the *power* of God unto the *newness* of Life.

---

[8] Long ago Bertrand Russell made this plain in his *Mysticism and Logic* which he wrote over against the ravings of Herbert Spencer's shallow optimism. He has recently made it even plainer in his lectures delivered to Columbia University, New York, *The Impact of Science on Society*, p. 4, "Last, I shall set forth the philosophy which is being suggested by the triumphs of science and shall contend that this philosophy, if unchecked, may inspire a form of unwisdom from which disastrous consequences may result." See the final lecture.

[9] Note that H. G. Well's last book was entitled *Mind at the End of its Tether*. Up to that time he had maintained his optimistic belief in education as the key to his optimism, but he ended his life in stark naked pessimism.

[10] This was the view of Krutch and of T. S. Elliott and Walter Lippmann in their Humanistic days, with their talk of "waste lands" and "hollow men." Since then the two latter have become Christians, and so have C. S. Lewis, John Middleton Murry, and Chad Walsh, as well as Gabriel Marcel.

## III. The Eschatological Emphasis

The third movement to be discerned in modern Theology is the predominance of Eschatology. This is a fearful word, but it is not a new one. Etymologically it means "the doctrine of Last Things"; but since the sounding of this note by Johannes Weiss and Albrecht Schweitzer, in opposition to the simple "Jesus of History" of the school of von Harnack, the word has veritably taken on a new meaning. It is derived from the Greek word *eschaton,* which is thought by many to be used in the New Testament as an adjective, and not as a noun. However this may be, it is certain that today we need two new words, "eschatic" as an adjective, to express clearly what *now* we mean by "eschatological"; and, either a transliteration of the Greek word *eschaton* used as a noun to express the *events* of the Gospel—the end of time which appeared in the midst of time—to which the Christian pins his faith, while he looks forward to the *hope* of the future, the consummation of time; or the term "eschaton event."

The development of this thought, in which eschatology is considered, not as an addendum to Christian Theology, but as coloring the whole of it, has been largely due to European scholars, especially to Swiss, Scandinavian and German scholars.[1] In Britain it has hardly been considered seriously until recent times.[2] Of course, we have all been familiar with C. H. Dodd's "realized eschatology," but that is only half the truth. There is in the New Testament also a "futurist eschatology" and C. H. Dodd has more recently become aware of this fact.

More and more theologians are seeing both the "Old Israel" and the "New Israel" in an eschatological setting. No longer are "Last Things" left to the weird and fantastic speculations of the millennarian sects. The Doctrine of Hope, which colors the New Testament, is again taken seriously and made of equal importance with that of *faith* and of *love*. This has modified the outlook on (1) the Old Testament conception of the after life; (2) the conception of the Church as an eschatological event; (3) the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the continuity of the Church; and (4) the notions of time and eternity. It is seen that the Greek notion of time and eternity fails to do justice to the Biblical notion, where a clear distinction is maintained between *kairos*

[1] See *Christ and Time* by Oscar Cullmann; Karl Barth's *Dogmatik,* Vol. 3, Pt. 2; Olaf Linton's essay on "Church and Ministry in the New Testament" in *A Book About the Church.*

[2] But see, *In the End God,* by Canon A. J. T. Robinson, and several references by Dr. Torrance in the 2nd and 3rd volumes of *The Scottish Journal of Theology.*

and *chronos, kairos* as time appointed and *chronos* as clock-time. This is having its effects on such doctrines as Predestination, Grace, Christology, the Holy Spirit, The Church, Sacraments and Ministry. So much is this so that Glasson's recent book on *The Second Advent* and Curtis' book on *Jesus the Teacher* almost seem like anachronisms or books from another world, a world of the forgotten past.

To understand what has happened, let us look at the difference between the Greek and Hebrew ways of looking at God. There are four of these differences which become clear as we study Plato and the Bible:

(1) To the Hebrew, God was *personal*, the *living* God, Creator, of all and related to His creation, including time as we know it, which was also part of His creative work. To the enlightened Greek, He was *impersonal* and the Hebrew and Christian conceptions of God must have appeared as crudely anthropomorphic. The Incarnation must have appeared as foolish and even indecent. St. Paul tells us that it was foolish to all such people, a scandal, and so it must appear as a "rock of offense" to the Greek mind in all ages.

(2) God was known to the Greeks as *observed*. Man was the *spectator* of God, as of other phenomena. For the writers of the Bible, God was *encountered* in an "I and Thou" relationship. Instead of being Object, He is Subject. It is as though we were, not *spectators*, but *players* in the game, not *watching* nor *observing*, but *encountering*. This is so primarily because the Bible is not concerned with man's search for God, but with *revelation*, God's disclosure of Himself in *personal encounter*.

(3) The Greek was concerned with *speculation;* the Hebrew with *witness*. Thus, the Bible is in the main a history book where prophecy and history are one.[2] There, certain events have to do with destiny. They are historical-eschatological, in other words "eschaton events." This the Germans have called *"heilsgechiste"*—holy history. These events have an eschatological significance which others have not. They may be regarded as "acts of God"—"the mighty acts of God." "Not by might nor by power, but by mine arm, saith the Lord." The most important of these are connected with the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Particular events do establish eternal truths. That

[2] So much is this so that in the Hebrew Bible such books as Josuah, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are called "the Former Prophets." The Hebrews, and not the Greeks, were the founders of interest in history.

was the ugly ditch over which Lessing with his Greek mind could not leap, however he tried, as he said in his lectures at Jena. Many other Greek-minded have followed him in this inability. Thus, what the Greeks would have called "the evanescent" had for the Hebrews a new significance.

(4) For the Greeks the time process, regarded by them as by all ancient people, except the Hebrews and Zoroastrians, as *cyclic,* was evanescent, and strictly speaking *evil* in itself. It had no *ultimate* value. In spite of Herodotus and Thucydides, history was no more than the sport of the gods, and its end, as the Tragedians showed, was *nemesis.* History was "shadow show." God touched it only tangentially; He did not *penetrate* it. There could be no such thing as "fulfilled time" nor the "last time." Eternity was for them timelessness, the negation of time, full of the "undifferentiated concrete." For the Hebrews, history was God's workshop where He is working out His purpose. It was full of meaning. For the Greek, it was hardly a symbol, using the word "symbol" in its modern emaciated form. For the Hebrew it was the *instrument* of God.

Christianity took over this Hebrew way of looking at the matter and made one radical alteration in it. It declared that in Christ Jesus the "New Age" had dawned, the "Last Time" had actually come. "God's Time" had entered "man's time." The Kingdom of God had actually come, though it was still to come, for the events which constituted the Gospel would not be complete until His "coming again." Thus the Kingdom was always in a state of *being* and *becoming* until the "Last Day."

It will help if I briefly summarize the latest Continental thought on this matter. In the main the "realized eschatology" of Prof. Dodd is replaced by what I will call "proleptic eschatology" in which the futurist element is retained alongside the realized element. These scholars claim that according to the Bible, time is the characteristic form of life, including the life of God. There are two kinds of time, (1) original, uncreated time; and (2) created time. So far as "uncreated time" is concerned, it is the time in which God lives His life; it is the perfection of the Kingdom of God, and past, present and future are in one another, not before or after one another as in "created time."[4]

[4] See the revealing study of "time" (*'eth*) as understood by the Hebrews in Wheeler Robinson's book, *Inspiration and Revelation,* pp. 109 *et seq.;* his study of "eternity" (*'olam*), pp. 113 *et seq.;* and his study of the inter-relationship of 'time" and eternity," pp. 116 *et seq.* In these studies he shows the sharp contrast between

Created time is granted to man as the form in which he lives his life, so that the world is a realm of free Divine activity and time a gift of the Creator. In this time every act has its moment and acts cohere in duration. Measured limits are appointed, beginning, duration and end. Thus created time, which is *given* is (1) time which is appointed, (2) time which begins, (3) time which ends. This is true both of the Old and New Testaments. For a complete understanding of Christian eschatology, the Man, Jesus, in His time is the point of departure. The New Testament shows Him to be the Lord of time, "He which *is,* and which *was,* and which *is to come.*"[5] The time of Jesus is "the time of God with us," a new meaning which can be ascribed to the word Emmanuel. The eschatological way of describing the Incarnation is to say that it is the Intemporization of God. We may contrast the time of Jesus with our time, that is the time in which He chose to live His incarnate life. For us (1) time begins, so from the point of view of earlier time, it does not yet exist; (2) our time continues, and from the contemporary standpoint, is limited in duration; (3) our time ends, so from the point of view of later time, it no longer exists. But, the Man, Jesus is not thus limited: (1) the Man, Jesus *will be* in that He *is* and *was;* (2) He *is* in that He *will be* and *was;* (3) He was in that He *is* and *will be.* Thus, He lives the life time which He needs, as we all do; but He lives the life of One who represents God to man and man to God; the life of the Judge who establishes God's righteousness before man, and Man's righteousness before God and before His fellow-men. Therefore, the life He lives as Man is more than the life of man: it is the life of God, who is the Lord of time, both "created time" and "God's time." The time in which He lives His life is not only "created time," but the time of God's life and of man's. It is the time which always *was* whenever men have lived, which always *is* where men now live, and which always *will be* whenever men shall live. All men become His contemporaries, though in different fashion as (1) those

---

the Greek and Hebrew ideas of "time" and "eternity." He shows that in the Hebrew conception, (1) God is intimately related to time, and that His relation to man itself requires the time-order for the fulfillment of His purpose. Time, as the necessary quality of those purposes, acquires a specific quality by its very relation to God, when man's time becomes God's time; (2) time and eternity stand in close relation, not in any sharp contrast. Eternity implies the remoteness of time: (3) this inter-relation is of particular importance for the eschatology, in which history finds its consummation, since this is timeless in content, though compelled to use a time vocabulary (timeless in the sense of "created time"). In an Appendix he contrasts the time-consciousness of Ecclesiastes, which he says is un-Hebraic. See also his study of the category of "actuality" in *Redemption and Revelation,* pp. 26 *et seq.* with which compare Pedersen's discussion of the Hebrew word *zakhar* (to remember) in his *Israel,* English Edition, Vol. I, pp. 106 *et seq.*

[5] Rev. I, 4, with which compare, John I: 1 and VIII: 58.

who lived *before* the Incarnation, (2) those who lived *during* the Incarnation, and (3) those who live *after* the Incarnation. They become His contemporaries through the power of the Holy Spirit, solely through His activity in periods 1 and 3, but again differently in period 1 from period 3. In period 1 the Holy Spirit points in *anticipation* to the Incarnation; in period 3 by *reflection,* though "anticipation" and "reflection" are here being used according to the Hebrew sense to signify *actuality.*[6] In any case, whenever we mention eschatology we point to the Holy Spirit.

All this means that to be in time is to be in relation, through Christ, to God's eternity. This, briefly, is how the matter is being looked at by Continental scholars, and it raises two acute problems: (1) the problem of the beginning, being in Christ, and (2) the problem of the end, death, resurrection, and the Last Judgment. Of these undoubtedly, the more interesting is the second. Perhaps the more controversial is the first, and I propose to deal with it as one problem in order to show what may happen when any one doctrine is looked at eschatologically. Naturally it concerns the Church and the sacraments, a field which thirty years ago would have hardly been considered worthy of attention in such a series of lectures. But times have changed and such questions as Church and Sacraments have sprung right into the forefront of theological thinking. This change is partly due to this eschatological interest, but also to the course which has been taken by New Testament criticism during this century. As early as the last half of the nineteenth century, New Testament scholars had begun to realize that the Christianity of the New Testament was profoundly sacramental. This was so of two schools of thought which stood opposed to the work of von Harnack: first, the school of Johannes Weiss and Schweitzer, and secondly, that of Reitzenstein and Bousset. Most of these scholars, especially the latter, were themselves non-sacramentalists, and regarded the sacramental nature of Christianity as a Pauline perversion of original Christianity. The source of the perversion was to be found in the Mystery Religions with which the Gentile Churches of the Pauline Mission were surrounded.[7]

---

[6] This lies behind the otherwise curious teaching in I Cor. 10, that the spiritual meat which the Hebrews ate in the wilderness was Christ and the same as the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist. Similar references are to be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. See my lecture, *The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews.*

[7] In this controversy, on the Roman Catholic side Loisy, following Weiss, wrote his book, *The Gospel and the Church,* offering it as a refutation of Harnack's *What is Christianity?* P. T. Forsyth's book, *The Church and the Sacraments* was indebted to both schools. In America the work of rediscovery is best represented by Benjamin W. Bacon, and E. F. Scott, neither of whom were sacramentalists.

But this oversimplification has been found by later scholars in the twentieth century to be unsound. The gulf which separates the Pauline Epistles from the Synoptic Gospels is nothing like so wide nor so deep as was formerly supposed. It is now much more certain that the roots of Pauline sacramentalism are to be found in Jewish prophetic symbolism out of which Christianity arose, than in the pagan surroundings.[8] This has meant, further, that the quality of Christian sacramentalism is seen to be something quite different from the sacramentalism of contemporary Greek and Oriental Cults. This difference is best expressed in the word *ethical.* Christian sacramentalism in the New Testament is *ethical,* rather than *mystical* in the *theosophical* sense of the word "mystical." This ethical nature is illustrated by the fact St. Paul could appeal to both Baptism and the Lord's Supper as grounds for arguing about Christian conduct.[9]

This ethical emphasis is related to the fact that the Christian Faith is grounded in a series of *events*—things which happen in history—"the mighty works of God." It is not, in the first place, based on *ideas,* but on *facts* of history, "the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth." These events had been prepared for in the long course of history which preceded the coming of Jesus, and especially in the history of Israel, the Covenant people of God. They are, briefly, the birth, life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, which have their consummation in the coming of the Holy Ghost and in His coming again in the "Last Time." The primitive Church before the conversion of Saul of Tarsus preached these things as "the saving acts of God." Jesus of Nazareth was regarded as the long promised Messiah of the Jews, foretold by the prophets. In Him "God had visited and redeemed His people Israel."[10] The primitive Church had not only *preached* these things, but had dramatically re-presented them in two redemption rites which they already practiced—Baptism and "the breaking of the bread." The primitive Church had not only *preached* these things, but had dramatically re-presented them in two redemption rites which they already practiced—Baptism and "the breaking of the bread." In both these rites

[8] This work is best represented in Old Testament scholars by the findings of H. Wheeler Robinson, H. H. Rowley, and Aubrey Johnson, all Baptists. See *The Cultic Prophet in Israel,* by Aubrey Johnson. European Old Testament scholars such as Gunkel, Mowinckle, and Pedersen have done much to strengthen it. It is represented amongst New Testament scholars by the work of Bultmann, Lietzmann, C. H. Dodd, Wilfred Knox, and W. D. Davis.

[9] See Romans VI and I Cor. XI: 20-34.

[10] See *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments,* by C. H. Dodd. It is interesting that Alexander Campbell not only anticipated the sacramentalism of the primitive Church, but the difference made by Dodd between *kērygma* and *didache.*

with their expressive symbolism—burial in and emergence from water in the one case, and "the breaking of the bread" in the other case—they "visibly depicted Christ crucified"[11] and "proclaimed the Lord's death till he come."[12] From the beginning the Church so preached and so worshipped, glorying in the Cross of Christ, which to the world was an instrument of shame. Such was the primitive Gospel and such is the core of the Gospel in all ages. Whatever this was to mean for the doctrine of the Person of Christ, and for the Doctrine of the Cross, it already meant that Jesus not only *brought* the Gospel, but He *was* the Gospel which He brought, and that His death was the saving act of God. The Gospel was not *good advice,* but *good news* about God in the Person of Jesus Christ. God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, had been "manifested in the flesh,"[13] and had "tabernacled with men"[14] in this life.

This means that the Christian Faith has to do with *this* life as well as with the life to come. In Christianity the material is not the opposite of the spiritual; rather it is profoundly spiritualized.[15] In one sense we can say that Christianity is a *materialistic* religion; but it is better to say that it is a deeply *sacramental* religion. It transfigures and transforms the life of this world, making all things new, investing everything and every action with a new significance, even insignificant things and insignificant actions. It provides no way of setting "spiritual" assets over against "material" debits and balancing the account; for *all* is spiritual. It is in the light of this new insight that the Christian sacraments take on a new meaning and a new value.

This new meaning and value has to do with eschatological understanding. It can be summed up briefly under two heads:

(1) The sacraments employ as material media water, bread, and wine. In the ancient world these constituted the very necessities of life, of *this* life. Without them, men could not live. It was these common things of our daily life which were made to serve as the media of the highest spiritual gifts, reminding us that in these things, "no man can live unto himself,"[16] that no man could eat his own supper whilst others

[11] See Gal. III, 1.
[12] I Cor. XI, 26.
[13] I John I: 2; IV: 2; John I: 14.
[14] John I: 14; Rev. XXI: 2, 3. In John I: 14 the word "tabernacled" is hidden in our English translation.
[15] Cf. Ignatius, *To The Ephesians,* 8, "Nay, these things which ye do after the flesh are spiritual; for ye do all things in Jesus Christ."
[16] Rom. XIV: 7.

went hungry,[17] and that no man could use the things which form the substance of life to his own advantage and the loss of others without denying Christ, without, as Paul says "being guilty of the body and blood of Christ,"[18] or, as the writer of Hebrews puts it, "crucifying to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame."[19] The sacraments are there for one thing, to remind us that we cannot play fast and loose with the historical realities of *this* life. Indeed, they are there that we might have power to transform the sordid realities of this life into something nearer to the Kingdom of God. To put it simply, this means that when a man accepts Baptism he becomes a new kind of creature functioning in this world, no longer living unto himself. He forsakes selfishness for community. The eschatological notion forbids that in the sacraments we turn our gaze to heaven and forget this world.

(2) In the same way that the Christian Faith has to do with matter and spirit, it has to do with "our time" and "God's time." Just as matter and spirit are not in opposition for the Christian, so time and eternity are not in opposition. The Biblical concept of eternity is not like the Greek concept, that of timelessness in which nothing *happens*, that of the *negation* of time; but one in which "created time" is related to "God's time" (eternity). We are "between the times," between "God's time" before there was "created time," and "God's time" when "created time" will be no more, when mortality will be swallowed up in immortality. The events which constitute the Gospel are events in history, in "our time," but they are more than this, they are the penetration of "God's time" (eternity) into our time, an "eternal now" appearing in history. Thus, they have a double quality. Whilst our Lord was begotten and born at a specific time in history, He was "begotten before all worlds."[20] Whilst He was crucified at a specific time in history, He "was slain from the foundation of the world."[21] His life and death constitute the redemption of time, of "our time," investing it with a new eternal quality. Likewise, it is the work of the Church, in Him, to "redeem the time."[22] This eschatological [23] quality attaches particularly to the Christian sacraments, which express the foundation events of the Gospel. As events the sacraments have the same double quality.

---

[17] I Cor. XI: 21.
[18] I Cor. XI: 27.
[19] Heb. VI: 6.
[20] The Nicene Creed.
[21] Rev. XII: 8.
[22] Eph. V: 16.
[23] The word means "relating to last things," and the word "last" means what it says. It refers to the end of time as we know it.

They are *events* in time (action is their nature), but they transcend time. Baptism introduces into the life eternal, which, as an "earnest" is possessed here and now; and the Lord's Supper is the anticipation of the Lamb's Bridal Feast,[24] which is granted till He come. The life eternal into which we are introduced is particularly the life of the Church, the redeemed society, and the Church is to act as leaven within the whole of society that it may leaven the whole lump. This means a profound ethical discipline in the whole of life.

This is the way in which the sacraments are coming to be understood in the ecumenical discourse which is going forward. Applied to Baptism it means that it is more difficult, than under either Greek or Latin sacramentalism, to find a place for Infant Baptism or for the impairing of the rite such as affusion has produced in the West. So much is this so that there has literally appeared a baptismal ferment in Europe.[25] Two ways seem open: (1) to empty the New Testament content out of Infant Baptism, and to regard it simply as a dedicatory rite;[26] (2) to give up Infant Baptism altogether, reserving Baptism to a time when faith and penitence are possible. Advocacy of this second line has been taken by no less a figure than Karl Barth when in 1943 he lectured to theological students on *Die Kirkliche Lehre von der Taufe* (translated into English under the title, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*). Recently his colleague, Oscar Cullmann, has replied in *Baptism in the New Testament*. So far as the Continent is concerned, the battle is on in both the Reformed and Lutheran Churches, though unlike earlier battles in this field, it is perfectly friendly, and perhaps is better described as discourse. In England the Church of England and the Methodist Church among those which practice Infant Baptism have been most influenced. In the former there is a strong Baptismal Reform Movement organized, not to get rid of Infant Baptism, but to get rid of indiscriminate Baptism. The Bishop of Oxford, perhaps the most rigid of Anglo-Catholic Bishops, would go further and substitute for Infant Baptism the Catechumenate with Baptism, Chrism and First Communion as one act at the dawn of adolescence.[27]

---

[24] See Matt. XXV: 1-13; Rev. XXI, XXII.

[25] See an article "The Baptismal Ferment," which I was asked to write in *The Ecumenical Review* for July, 1951, where I reviewed a number of books on the subject, mostly in French and German, which have recently appeared.

[26] This way was advocated by Canon Oliver Quick in his book on the Sacraments in *The Library of Constructive Theology*, but it has not been followed by most of his Anglo-Catholic brethren. It probably did influence the Baptismal Office in the 1929 Prayer Book. It has been rejected by Free-Churchmen like John S. Whale, though advocated by Norman Snaith.

[27] See his Diocesan Magazine, Sept. 1946.

Recently a Commission appointed jointly by the Convocations of Canterbury and York, reported in *Baptism Today* (1949), on the complicated question, and was bold enough to deny the validity of the Doctrine of Original Guilt. The Methodist Church has had a Commission sitting on the subject. Its Report presented to the 1951 Conference was referred back and the Commission enlarged.[28]

The Faith and Order Commissions on "The Church" and on "Ways of Worship" have both listed in their Reports this subject to come up for discussion at Lund this year, along with the question of Apostolic Succession, and they have done so because both Baptists and Disciples (but unfortunately mostly of the British variety) have made their witness on the subject clear and firm.

This is by way of showing what the eschatological outlook will do to discussion in one field of doctrine. It will undoubtedly do the same in the field of the continuity of the Church and Apostolic Succession, and we may hope it will have a beneficial effect in a field which has hitherto been controversial, and rigid.

---

[28] See *Infant Baptism Today*, a joint document put out by Baptists and Disciples in Great Britain. See further, *Towards True Baptism*, by Principal James Gray; also *Dr. Whale and Infant Baptism*.